

**ED.L.D. CAPSTONE SUMMARY**

# **Developing a New Teacher Leadership and Compensation System in Iowa: A Consensus-Based Process**

**Ryan Wise, Ed.L.D.'13**

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GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF EDUCATION

## CAPSTONE SUMMARY

# Developing a New Teacher Leadership and Compensation System in Iowa: A Consensus-Based Process



### Ryan Wise, Ed.L.D.'13

**Role:** Facilitated the work of a task force charged with developing recommendations for a new statewide leadership and compensation system; authored the accompanying cost model; built broad support for the proposed changes to ensure high-fidelity implementation and sustainability

“*Leadership is creating the conditions under which others can do their best work.*”

– Frances Frei, Harvard Business School

## PROJECT GOAL

Ed.L.D. candidate Ryan Wise’s goal in Iowa was to assist in creating a new statewide system of teacher leadership and compensation for the state of Iowa. To accomplish this, he led a task force charged with providing recommendations for this new system, developed the accompanying cost model, and built broad support for the proposed reforms so that they could be translated into viable legislation.

Wise adopted key guiding principles to increase his chances of success:

- 1) Facilitate the task force so that each member has a sense of purpose and draws from a well-developed knowledge base.
- 2) Effectively structure the process so that the task force can produce a set of actionable, consensus-based recommendations by the deadline.
- 3) Solicit public input on the task force recommendations.
- 4) Develop a cost model that clearly accounts for each of the major costs of the program.
- 5) Use the cost model and recommendations to develop legislation that is politically and financially feasible, so that the governor can support it and introduce it to the legislature.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In 2011, the Iowa Department of Education released a blueprint for education reform titled *One Unshakable Vision: World-Class Schools for Iowa*. Among other things, it called for raising the minimum teacher salary to attract quality candidates into education, creating teacher leadership roles, and implementing a four-tier teacher compensation system.

Five-term Governor Terry Branstad supported these changes, but he knew he needed to build consensus and ensure adequate funding before including them in his legislative agenda. Accordingly, he commissioned a statewide task force to study teacher leadership and compensation and to draft detailed recommendations for developing an effective and sustainable system for expanded professional development for teachers, diversified career opportunities, and increased compensation. The task force’s charge and list of members are available in Appendix A.

In the third year of HGSE’s Doctor in Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.) Program, candidates complete 10-month, field-based residencies. Each Ed.L.D. student completes a strategic project and produces a capstone that provides a descriptive, analytic, and reflective account of the resident’s leadership of and contributions to the strategic project. This capstone summary offers quick insight to the resident’s work and offers next steps, resources, and questions to consider for practitioners who might be leading similar work.

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Iowa Director of Education Jason Glass was charged with leading these efforts, and he selected Ed.L.D. resident Ryan Wise to facilitate the task force's work. In addition, Wise would be responsible for serving as lead writer and editor of the task force's final report, presenting the draft recommendations to and soliciting feedback from stakeholders across Iowa, leading the cost modeling to determine the financial impact of the proposed system, and helping to develop legislation creating the teacher leadership and compensation system.

To prepare himself for the work, Wise immersed himself in the history of compensation reform and teacher career development nationally and in Iowa; the impact of money and monetary incentives on teacher recruitment, retention, and performance; and the opportunities and challenges created by the development of differentiated teacher leadership roles. This broad knowledge base was instrumental to his work. Key readings Wise drew from are listed in Appendix B.

The Task Force on Teacher Leadership and Compensation held its first meeting on March 2, 2012, facilitated by Iowa Director of Education Jason Glass. Wise took over the facilitation duties at the following meeting, in April. The group continued to meet monthly in preparation for submitting its final recommendations in October.

Based on what he had learned in the Ed.L.D. program, Wise determined that one of his first steps as task force facilitator would be to lead the group in developing a theory of action to guide its work. As he noted in his capstone, the theory of action "describes how our recommendations will move Iowa toward achieving its vision of providing a world-class education for all students. Simply put, a theory of action helps us be explicit about what we are doing, why we are choosing a particular course of action, and how we expect our actions will lead to improved outcomes."

The task force developed this theory of action:

If we effectively compensate teachers; recruit and promote excellent teachers and provide support as they collaborate reflectively to refine their practice; create the political will and understanding necessary to remake the status of the teaching profession; give highly effective teachers opportunities to grow, refine, and share their expertise; and develop a clear system with quality implementation, then ... student learning will increase, student outcomes will improve, and students will be prepared to succeed in a globally competitive environment.

### Goals for the Statewide Teacher Leadership Compensation Framework

- 1) Attract able and promising new teachers by offering a more competitive starting salary and a variety of enhanced career opportunities.
- 2) Retain the most effective teachers in teaching (as opposed to administration or to leaving the field altogether) by providing enhanced career opportunities.
- 3) Encourage professional growth in teaching practice by recognizing and rewarding teachers who seek out learning opportunities aligned with local goals.
- 4) Promote collaboration by developing and supporting opportunities for teachers in schools, districts, and statewide to learn from each other.
- 5) Reward initiative and competence by creating pathways for career opportunities that come with increased leadership and compensation.
- 6) Improve student performance by strengthening instruction.

Wise also helped the group formulate a set of goals for their work (see sidebar).

The theory of action and goals were important reference points for the task force as they carried out their work in the months that followed. By October 2012, there was a comprehensive plan and cost model to increase the minimum teacher salary in Iowa, improve entry into the teaching profession, create multiple leadership opportunities for outstanding teachers, and reconfigure professional development for teachers.

The task force's final recommendations received widespread public support, were championed by Governor Branstad and became the basis for new legislation. (A list of the recommendations is available in Appendix C.) The new teacher leadership and compensation system was approved by the Iowa legislature and signed into law in June 2013. "If fully implemented as intended," Wise emphasizes, "it will become the largest statewide teacher leadership system in the United States."

## LESSONS LEARNED

Wise identifies several key lessons from his experience:

1. When major policy changes are being undertaken, goal alignment among key actors is vital. In this case, the priorities of the Governor's Office and the Department of Education were identical. Both had embraced the state's 2011 *One Unshakable Vision* reform blueprint and were focused on teacher leadership as a key driver for improving student achievement. Other key stakeholders shared similar goals, and the public was also supportive, given how much conversation had already occurred across the state about the urgent need to improve teacher quality. As Wise notes in his capstone, "This coalescence of support and available resources was critical in moving the process of creating a system of teacher leadership and compensation forward in Iowa."
2. No matter how busy you are with the work, it is important to take time to communicate with key constituencies. Wise admitted that, at times, he became so deeply immersed in details of the policy recommendations being developed that he "lost sight of the need to build others' understanding and enthusiasm." He also learned how vital it is to explain the desired policy changes in a way that allows various stakeholders to clearly understand what is being proposed. As he reflected in his capstone, "One of my colleagues in particular pushed me to consistently sharpen my messages and consider different perspectives. He and others on the team would often say to me, 'That's too wonky.' I realized that it wasn't just about using language that is clear and resonant, but also about understanding the needs and interests of different stakeholder groups and being more deliberate about addressing their priorities."
3. If your goal is to change the law, remember that you are ultimately going to need legislators' support. Involve them early and strategically. When some legislators raised concerns about the teacher leadership and compensation plan, Wise realized that some of the resistance might have been prevented if he and his colleagues had engaged legislators earlier — for example, by inviting key legislators to attend some of the task force's meetings. As Wise's adviser Professor Robert Schwartz told him, "Even the best conceived and executed task force process can run aground if you don't involve the folks who have to agree to convert the report into law."
4. Leaders can prevent reform efforts from being derailed by proactively addressing common causes of failure. Wise knew that efforts to reform teacher leadership roles and compensation often falter due to inadequate funding, a lack of stakeholder engagement (especially from teachers), poor planning, and haphazard implementation. Accordingly, he believed that Iowa would need to

### Helpful Hints for an Effective Task Force

- ❖ Take advantage of technology as a time-saving way to share resources. Wise further developed a wiki (online site) where members could read and share relevant resources. Task force members uploaded numerous articles and added to it over time. It was a way to streamline answers to questions and build a common knowledge base.
- ❖ Take explicit and purposeful steps to cultivate trust and collaboration on the task force. Some of the actions that Wise took in this area were small — for example, always referring to the task force as "Team" in emails. Others were more substantive — for example, using a mix of whole-group and small group arrangements during each meeting to provide opportunities for members to make personal connections with a few people while also helping them to develop a collective identity. All were vital to creating a climate in which difficult topics could be addressed and differences resolved.
- ❖ Invite ongoing feedback from task force members, both public and private. At the end of each task force meeting, for example, Wise conducted a "plus/delta" activity that enabled members to share what they found helpful about the meeting and what they would change. In addition, he sent out a short, confidential e-survey after each meeting. Although the responses were confidential, Wise shared the broad themes with team members and also used the results to develop the agenda for the next meeting.

address each of these areas to ensure successful implementation of its new teacher leadership and compensation system. As he observed, “Too many past reforms have been pilots or have not been given the time and resources needed to fully develop. For this effort to be different, it must roll out quickly, demonstrate early success, and consistently improve over time.”

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

If you are facing the need or desire to move policy changes forward, consider the questions below as you plan your work.

1. Think about one or two major education reform initiatives that have been undertaken in your state or district over the past few years. How closely aligned or far apart were (are) the leadership and key stakeholder groups around these initiatives? How successful were (are) these efforts? If successful, what factors do you think contributed to success? If unsuccessful, what factors hindered success?
2. How would you describe your state and/or district context for education policy reforms? Harmonious, acrimonious, or something in-between? To what extent are various stakeholders and political leaders willing to work together? What do state or district leaders do — or what can they do — to create an environment that is conducive to collaboration and consensus-building?
3. Have you had any personal experience with trying to build consensus and shared purpose among various stakeholder groups to advance an education reform initiative? If so, what did you learn from this experience? What might you do differently in the future as a result?
4. How effective do you think you are in communicating with key constituencies? What do you do well? How might you improve? Is there anything in Wise’s work that might have helped you achieve greater success in this area?

## APPENDIX A: TASK FORCE CHARGE AND MEMBERSHIP

### Senate File 2284 – Teacher Performance, Compensation, and Career Development Task Force

A blueprint for education released by the Branstad-Reynolds administration in October 2011 included plans to redesign educator career pathways, to create teacher leadership roles, and to revise the compensation structure to support this new educator career structure. Because changes that involve compensation in education generate large cost implications and many questions, the Branstad-Reynolds administration's final recommendations for world-class schools called for a task force to study the career structure and compensation plan in 2012. The group's work began before the end of the legislative session because of the importance of moving forward on these issues.

The Iowa Legislature established a Teacher Performance, Compensation, and Career Development Task Force in Senate File 2284 and provided the following charge:

1. The director of the department of education shall appoint, and provide staffing services for, a teacher performance, compensation, and career development task force to develop recommendations for a new teacher compensation system to replace the current teacher compensation system which addresses, at a minimum, the following:
  - a. Duties and responsibilities of apprentice, career, mentor, and master teachers.
  - b. Utilizing retired teachers as mentors.
  - c. Strategic and meaningful uses of finite resources and the realignment of resources currently available.
  - d. Mechanisms to substantially increase the average salary of teachers who assume leadership roles within the profession.
  - e. Standardizing implementation of task force recommendations in all of Iowa's school districts and public charter schools.
2. The task force shall also propose a peer coaching pilot project to expand excellence in the teaching profession. The proposal shall include recommendations for peer coaching criteria goals, strategies, documentation of progress, incentives for participation, and program evaluation.

The group was established on February 15, 2012, as the Task Force on Teacher Leadership and Compensation.

### Task Force Membership

**Teresa Bellinghausen**, Heartland AEA/  
Professional Learning and Leadership  
Consultant, Johnston

**Connie Boesen**, Des Moines Public  
Schools/Board Member, Des Moines

**Molly Boyle**, Waukee Community  
School District/Third-Grade Teacher,  
Waukee

**Mary Jane Cobb**, Iowa State Education  
Association/Executive Director, Des  
Moines

**Mike Cormack**, Iowa Department of  
Education/Policy Liaison, Des Moines

**Tom Downs**, Iowa Association of  
School Boards/Executive Director, Des  
Moines

**Paul Gausman**, Sioux City Community  
School District/Superintendent, Sioux  
City

**Jason Glass**, Chair, Iowa Department of  
Education/Director, Des Moines

**Jessica Gogerty**, Roosevelt High  
School/School Improvement Leader,  
Des Moines

**Jodie Graham**, Ankeny High School/  
Assistant Principal, Ankeny

**Justin Gross**, Nevada High School/  
Principal, Nevada

**Julie Heller**, Central High School/  
Behavior Interventionist, Davenport

**Kent Henning**, Grand View University/  
President, Des Moines

**Angie Jandrey**, Mount Pleasant  
Community School District/  
Kindergarten Teacher, Mount Pleasant

**Ann Lebo**, Grundy Center High School  
and Hawkeye Community College/  
English Teacher, Grundy Center

**Duane Magee**, Iowa Board of  
Educational Examiners/Executive  
Director, Des Moines (Waukee  
Community School District Assistant  
Superintendent of HR at time of  
appointment to task force)

**Mike May**, Businessman, Spirit Lake  
(also current State Board of Education  
member and retired teacher)

**Isaiah McGee**, Iowa Department of  
Education/Program Consultant, Des  
Moines

**Kent Mick**, Corwith-Wesley-LuVerne  
Community School District/History  
Teacher and Curriculum Coordinator,  
Corwith

**Diane Pratt**, Fort Dodge Community  
School District/Talented & Gifted  
Teacher, Fort Dodge

**Carl Smith**, Iowa State University/  
Professor, School of Education, Ames

**Dan Smith**, School Administrators of  
Iowa/Executive Director, Clive

**David Stoakes**, Retired, Cedar Falls  
(District Superintendent at time of  
appointment to task force)

**Denny Wulf**, Norwalk Community  
School District/Superintendent,  
Norwalk

**Don Zuck**, Retired, Ankeny (Ankeny  
Economic Development Corp./  
Executive Director at time of  
appointment to task force)

### Non-Voting Task Force Membership

**Linda Fandel**, Office of the Governor/  
Special Assistant for Education, Des  
Moines

**Phil Wise**, Iowa Department of Educa-  
tion/Policy Advisor to the Director, Des  
Moines

**Ryan Wise**, Task Force Facilitator, Iowa  
Department of Education/Policy Fellow,  
Des Moines

## APPENDIX B: USEFUL READINGS

Johnson, S.M. (2012). Having it both ways: Building the capacity of individual teachers and their schools. *Harvard Educational Review*. 82(1), 107-122.

Johnson, S. M., & Papay, J. P. (2009). *Redesigning teacher pay : A system for the next generation of educators*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Odden, Allan and M. Wallace (2007). *Redesigning Teacher Salary Structures: A Handbook for State and Local Policy Makers*.

OECD (2011). *Building a High-Quality Teaching Professional Lessons from around the world*.

York-Barr, J. & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? *Review of Educational Leadership*. 74(3), 255-316.

## APPENDIX C: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE IOWA TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND COMPENSATION TASK FORCE

1. Create and fund multiple, meaningful, and well-designed career pathway opportunities open to all teachers in Iowa.
2. Establish a pathway that utilizes the wisdom and expertise of educators who are not currently practicing, including retired teachers.
3. Review existing allocations and use these funds strategically to enhance teacher compensation and create leadership opportunities.
4. Appropriate new money for the explicit purposes of raising base pay to a competitive level and creating additional leadership opportunities for teachers.
5. Establish a Commission on Educator Leadership and Compensation to ensure consistent and successful implementation.
6. Collaborate with districts implementing a mechanism for piloting peer assistance and coaching programs.
7. Incentivize teachers to teach in locally and state-defined hard-to-staff subjects and high-need schools.
8. Build upon existing policy and statute, and provide adequate, sustained funding and implementation support for teacher leadership.
9. Set the boundaries of the system, but allow districts to customize.
10. Provide time for local planning and implementation inclusive of teachers in the decision-making process.
11. Require districts to implement professional development structures aligned with the Iowa Professional Development Model that support each career pathway, and utilize teacher leaders to ensure continuous collaboration on student growth.
12. Coordinate the development of teacher leadership pathways with teacher preparation programs.
13. Create a residency year for entry into the teaching profession to build a more seamless transition from teacher preparation to practice/employment.

The full task force report can be accessed here: [educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2738:teacher-leadership-and-compensation&catid=666:highlights](https://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2738:teacher-leadership-and-compensation&catid=666:highlights)